

PREFACE



This book is about the interdependence between human culture(s) and their environment(s) and focuses on the effects which the changes in the one have on the other. All the chapters in this volume are original papers based on recent (and partly on-going) longitudinal research carried out in different parts of the world by anthropologists, geographers, psychologists and sociologists. Coming from a variety of theoretical and methodological backgrounds they all discuss a range of different, but interrelated environmental problems.

The chapters also represent a major cross section of contemporary environment-related social science research in Germany – all funded by the German Research Council (DFG) – and all but one was carried out under the aegis of either the multidisciplinary *Schwerpunktprogram (SPP) Mensch und Globale Umweltveränderungen – Sozial- und Verhaltenswissenschaftliche Dimensionen* (Special Research Program: ‘Humans and Global Environmental Change, the Social and Behavioural Dimensions’), or the project *IMPETUS* (‘Integrated Approach to the Efficient Management of Scarce Water Resources in West Africa’) sponsored by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Both these programs aimed at deepening our understanding of environmental problems from the perspective of the social sciences. Natural sciences can detect and analyse the causes of environmental problems but since most of them are related to culture-specific human behaviour, values, norms, needs and wants, the social sciences can and must play a much greater role in understanding and solving them. The result of such research could and should provide politicians and other policy makers with information and analyses which can help solve the pressing problems that we are all facing. It is hoped that this volume will go some way in doing this.

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